

# New outlaws brace for onslaught aimed at fringe of society

**Duncan Campbell examines the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, while Viviek Chaudhary looks at some of the activities that the bill aims to ban**

**'P** EOPLES are having a hideous time in some areas, said Lady Olga Maitland, Conservative MP for Sutton and Cheam, as she expressed her anger over the delay in the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill this summer. The public has a right to expect proper action to be taken now.

Action, whether the public deem it proper or not, is due to be taken when the bill reappears in the Commons in October — after the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, confirmed in July that it would be delayed to allow a series of debates in the Lords to be reversed.

People who live on what are seen as the edges of society believe that once the bill becomes law they will indeed be in for a "hideous time".

Certain clauses are aimed at people — squatters, riverside, new-age travellers, hunt saboteurs and demonstrators whose very mention at a Tory Party conference can raise a "boohiss" response to a noise level that would, under the bill, constitute a new offence.

Effectively the key clauses aimed at these groups are:

**Gatherings:** Clauses 65, 66: empower local councils, on application by the chief constable and with the Home Secretary's permission, to ban gatherings of more than 20 people on a

police or force arrest. The number of vehicles is now reduced to six, and the trespass clause is removed so that those originally allowed on to the land legally can be removed. A request to leave can be made by a local authority even if vehicles have the landowner's permission to stay. "Damage" to property can include urinating. A local authority's duty to provide sites for a limited number of travellers is abolished.

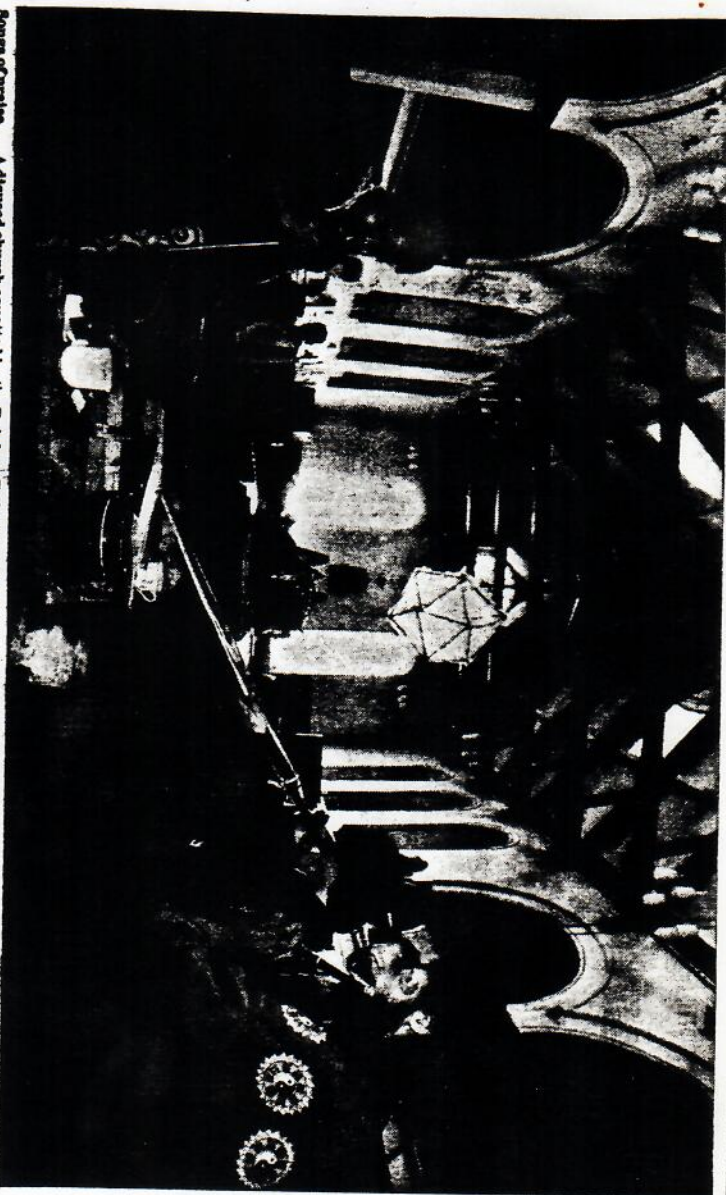
**Hint saboteurs:** Clause 63: makes it an offence for a trespasser in the open air or a non-traveller on a highway — provided it is not a surfaced road — to attempt to obstruct or obstruct an activity taking place in the open air.

**Squatters:** Clauses 67, 68 and 69: give additional power for anyone authorised by a property owner to make forced entry. A squatter refusing to leave immediately could face a prison sentence. Clauses 55: enable police officers of inspection or above who believe that "there is or has been or may be or is likely to be or may be or is likely to be" violence may take such action locally to authorise top-down searches of pedestrians and vehicles.

Resistance to the above clauses was slow to develop. Neither the main opposition parties nor the trade unions have taken part in public campaigns against the bill. Opposition has since come



Songs of praise... A disused church squatted by the Rainbow Tribe in north London offers an advice centre and 24-hour cafe



PHOTOGRAPH BY GABRIEL TUNMAN

## The DIY culture stands united on home front

### The squatters

**LESS** THAN two months ago it was just another empty, derelict building in inner-city London. Today, it is home to an eclectic collection of drifters, students, musicians, and eco-activists.

The squat was "busted" open (squatters' terminology for entering a building three weeks ago. Within hours, a legal notice on the front door warned the authorities that they need a court order for eviction.

Under the criminal justice bill, the notice will be about as useful as the other sign on the front of the building in Kenilworth, north London, giving the opening times of the former Department of Health and Social Security office.

Once the bill becomes law, squatters can be evicted within 24 hours, and most of the 25-year-old

**'We hope to carry on, but I despair when I think about the criminal justice bill. Where would all the people have gone if it had been in effect? There are not enough homes as it is. The bill is just going to push people on to the streets'**

I'm good with my hands and have got tools, I've been doing as much work as I can," said Christine Slatery, aged 27, a former journalist, is one of several trying to get local authority funding for the squat. The eventual aim is to try to set up artists' studios, creative facilities, and permanent accommodation for homeless people.

With a blanket wrapped around her to keep warm, she kneels by a computer in her neatly-kept room, writing letters to the London borough of Camden outlining their plans. They have been told that the borough intends to evict them, but remain optimistic.

"We hope to carry on, but I despair when I think about the criminal justice bill," she said. "Where would all these people have gone if the bill had been in effect?"

"There is not enough accommodation as it is. The bill is just going to push people on to the



# Cloud over newlyweds' life on the road despite Rolls-Royce start

## The travellers

**I**T WAS a traditional English church wedding. The bride wore white and the groom tailed. She arrived in a Rolls-Royce, was given away by her father, and the newlyweds left in a horse-drawn carriage to a village hall reception.

Then Ian and Dorothy Shiner went home — to a converted coach parked in the Hertfordshire countryside near the small town of Lebury.

Mr and Mrs Shiner want a family and a pleasant home. The coach is neatly maintained. There is a double bed, sofa, a small television, window curtains and a kitchen present pots and pans. Plans are in hand for a partition and for repainting paneling.

However, unlike most newlyweds Mr and Mrs Shiner, both aged 28, want to live on the road, roaming the countryside with their two dogs

and posse of vehicles — the coach, an old British Rail van, a trailer which they use as a guest room and a van for Mr Shiner's welding work.

But a cloud hovers at the dawn of their matrimonial life — the criminal justice bill — the threat to thousands of travellers.

More than six vehicles are parked on the site where six other travellers also live and, even though no-one has complained about them, once the bill is law the Shiners could face continuous evictions and vehicle seizures.

Mr Shiner says he went on the road because it was cheaper than paying rent for a house or flat.

"It is a very diverse community and people go on the road for different reasons. As a traveller you can mix and match. But I should not be branded a criminal for living like I do."

Near the Shiners' home, neighbour Iman Walker paints flowers on horse-drawn carriages which he will then sell in

Lebury for £3 each. A breeze blows from the corn and hop fields as a camp fire smoulders and Mr Walker's two children chase around the family tent pitched under a clump of trees.

Mr Walker, aged 31, has been on the road since he was 17 and for the past year has been wandering with his family and partner Rachel on a cart drawn by horses Kest and Porridge Oak.

The family camp on an open fire and light the tent with candles. Their most sophisticated equipment is a tiny portable radio with a chicken tin for an antenna.

Mr Walker follows the fortunes of Birmingham City football club.

Sweeping back his mane of dreadlocked hair and piggy-backed with his mother and piggy-backed with his father, Mr Walker chuckles as he talks in a strong Birmingham accent about the stereotypes many people have of travellers. "Most of the public think we are lazy. I have not signed on for more than five years. I pick hops, fruit and vegetables and when people

## 'Everyone likes dope and dancing'

### The ravers

**T**HE woman's voice on the other end of the telephone issued the instructions with military-style precision.

"Get off the M1 at junction 11. Follow the road for about two miles, turn right at a mini-roundabout and head into the industrial estate and try and get there for around midnight. Once you're there, you'll see loads of happy hippies."

Soon after midnight there were not only happy hippies parked in the industrial estate but scores of travellers and youngsters from nearby Luton and surrounding Bedfordshire towns all waiting to rave.

Vehicles were ordered to park facing the same direction and wait for an order from the organisers to head off. Car stereos blasted out rave music as people crunched in and around their vehicles, chatting, drinking and discussing the previous week's rave.

Others walked up and down the conveyer offering drugs for sale. "You sorted mate?" said one man sticking his head into my car. "Need any Es, trips, hash or grass?"

A line soon developed at the

customised Volkswagen Beetle parked in front of me as ravers queued to buy their Es. At a knock down price of £10.

One satisfied customer, who gave his name as Sunny and who tends all the Bedfordshire raves organised by the group known as the Exodus Collective said: "We're not doing any harm. People want to rave and the Government's not going to be able to stop them."

No one's forcing people to take drugs or buy them and the criminal justice bill is just another attempt by the authorities at stopping people from doing what they want. It's all about control of the mind."

At 1am a bearded man with long hair walked along and shouted: "Let's go and party."

The mass of vehicles, now numbering around 800, began making their way towards the secret location.

The conveyer travelled through the Bedfordshire countryside along the A5, causing traffic jams worthy of central London during rush hour. The few passers-by looked bemused by the mass invasion of cars and, at times, the conveyer came to a grinding halt as it negotiated tiny country lanes not designed for such volume of traffic.

After almost two hours of me-

andering through Bedfordshire towns and villages, the conveyer reached a cement quarry where up to 5,000 people gathered in a massive sandpit dancing to the frantic beat of rave music.

A massed line of sound speakers was stuck in one corner, paying chivalric banners were draped over the edge of the pit and strobe lights shone on the crowd and up towards the full moon, creating a surreal scene resembling something out of an episode of Dr Who.

A huge fire burnt above the sandpit while some ravers, who were sitting around it, rolled joints, drank tea and read leaflets handed out by the organisers on the criminal justice bill.

Soups, aged 23, who lives in Luton, said: "Once the bill comes into effect everything we did tonight will be against the law. Nobody is doing anything wrong here and people just want to enjoy themselves. No one is going to stop raving and everyone is determined to fight the police and the Government."

The majority of ravers were like Soups — ordinary youngsters who have suddenly found themselves becoming political and are determined to place the effect the criminal justice bill will have on their lives.

For most, raving and drug-taking have become an integral part of their social life and they feel the bill will further criminalise an already marginalised section of society.

"Let's face it, everyone smokes dope and likes to dance. Why should that be against the law?" asked Soups.

By the very early hours of the morning, the majority was still dancing while the organisers passed around a bucket to help finance the rave. There was no entrance charge, no pushy behaviour, and the atmosphere remained warm and friendly amongst a crowd made up of all ages and races.

The criminal justice bill, Standard firm and fight it," scanned the bill. "This is partly done for the people by the people. Please give what you can."

Most of the ravers threw money into the bucket pledging that despite the bill, they would continue to rave and attend future events organised by the Exodus Collective.

"It's not just against ravers, the bill will affect everyone," said Banger.

"The Government can try and make all this illegal and suppress people but one thing the criminal justice bill can't do is kill the spirit."

highway or any land without the owner's permission. It will be an offence to take part in such a gathering or to invite another to do so.

Police can turn back anyone within five miles of a place subject to a banning order.

**Gatherings with music:** Clauses 58, 60, known as the "rave" clause but can apply to any form of gathering at which music is played. It has drawn attention because of the drawing of references to the types of music proscribed, such as those "wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats."

The music must be played at night, be likely to cause "serious distress to the inhabitants of the locality" and be on land at least "partly open to the air."

If a police officer of superintendent rank or above believes that such an event may take place, all those present may be required to leave and, if they fail to do so, can be arrested.

**People living in vehicles:** Clauses 56, 72, 73, 74, 75, an extension of the 1968 Public Order Act, which requires people who trespass with 12 vehicles or more or who damage property to leave when requested by

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